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# Pressure in gulf aimed at Khomeini according to US and Mideast analysts

By William Beecher  
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - US and Mideast analysts say they believe that Iraq, having apparently thrown back an Iranian ground assault aimed at cutting the highway from Baghdad to Basra, will continue a relentless campaign of air raids against cities throughout Iran.

The objective, they say, is to increase popular pressure on Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian revolutionary leader, to agree to a general cease-fire and negotiations aimed at ending the 4½-year war.

However, since Khomeini is expected to be unwilling to go along with peace talks and since the Iranians will have to find some way to retaliate, the analysts speculate that Khomeini will either order new ground attacks - regardless of casualties suffered - or expand the war by striking oil facilities in one or more Persian Gulf nations which are supporting the Iraqi war effort.

Yesterday, Iraq announced air raids on the Iranian cities of Isfahan, Bushehr and Kermanshah as its apparent answer to Libyan a statement by the Libyan leader, Col. Moammar Khadafy, that Khomeini was ready to stop hitting Iraqi cities if President Saddam Hussein of Iraq would follow suit. Libya and Iran are allies.

Western intelligence specialists say the roots of the recent escalation in the war reach back to the first of the year when Saddam Hussein believed that the war of attrition would go on endlessly unless he could force a negotiated settlement.

Earlier, analysts say, he had hoped the United States and other Western nations, fearful about the war expanding to nearby Gulf oil producing states, would put heavy economic pressure on Iran to negotiate a settlement. But he is believed to have concluded that the West had ceased to worry about an expanding war and was prepared to see the Iranians and Iraqis fight on for years. Since last

June there had been a UN cease-fire in effect covering civilian targets in both countries. On March 4, Iraq staged air strikes against an unfinished nuclear plant at Bushehr and a steel plant at Ahwaz.

Iraq argued these were legitimate economic targets - not unlike oil tankers - and not population centers covered by the UN cease-fire. But Iran disagreed and commenced heavy shelling of Basra, the second largest city in Iraq. Baghdad warned that unless Iran allowed a UN inspection team into the two bombed sites to back its story of not hitting civilian population targets, it would unleash its considerably stronger air force to bomb 30 Iranian cities, including Tehran.

That was the start of the current expanded war.

Iraq, meanwhile, had been shifting some of its 200,000 troops opposite Basra to three points to the north. On March 11, they struck on three fronts, pushing an estimated 25,000 troops through the Huwailah marshes and across the Tigris river, with a small force reaching the strategic Basra-Baghdad highway.

Iraq's counterattack was slow in coming but appears to have succeeded in the last couple of days in repelling the breakthrough, inflicting thousands of deaths and casualties.

At the United Nations, Iraqi diplomats are attempting to get support for a new initiative by the world body involving both an overall cease-fire and peace talks. But since Iran apparently only is willing to agree to a limited resumption of the no-cities cease-fire, diplomacy does not hold much promise, sources say.

Meanwhile, Baghdad now vows to shoot at any aircraft, including commercial airliners, flying through Iranian airspace as another part of its effort to increase economic pressure on Tehran.

Intelligence sources say the Iranian regular army has consistently resisted pressures to mount large-scale ground assaults on the argument that it needed more and better weapons. The recent as-

sault across the Huwailah marshes is understood to have featured elements of eight poorly armed, poorly trained Revolutionary Guard divisions, with regular army units in reserve.

If Iran is to launch new assaults with any hope of success, analysts here say the regular army will have to become more actively involved. In addition, Khomeini will have to be willing to accept the political repercussions on the home front from tens of thousands of new casualties. Since Iraq enjoys major numerical advantages in jet fighter-bombers, helicopter gunships, tanks, armored personnel carriers and artillery, most analysts believe it will not be defeated in the field. But neither does it have the ability to defeat the better motivated Iranian forces.

Most specialists do not believe Iran will use its dwindling force of fighter-bombers to bomb oil facilities in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Last year the Saudis shot down an Iranian F4 which approached too close to its shore. But they concede that commando raids or terrorist attacks are well within Iran's capability to bring to bear.